NOMAD BEDOUINS

BEDOUIN WOMEN

12 Glubb G-3 (1930-1948) 1948 MGI Jordan MGI
Glubb MSS

I decided, in spite of my reception, to stay for the night in the Beni Sakhr tents, both in the hope that more intimate acquaintance would overcome this inauspicious beginning and also to learn more about the Beni Sakhr, a tribe which I had never met before. The shaikh in the car drove off after lunch, and by the time we had had dinner and were sitting in a circle round the fire, the atmosphere had become more cordial.

Sitting over the coffee-pots, I noticed a long, slim, dark-complexioned youth, with those fine features which distinguish a certain type of Nejdi nomad, and which were in contrast to the fairer complexions and thicker build of the Beni Sakhr. When an opportunity offered, I enquired about his origin, and was told that he came of the tribe of Mutair. My work in southern Iraq had brought me into contact with this tribe, though usually as enemy raiders, and I knew the names of their leaders and the geography of their country. The boy's face glowed with pleasure when he heard once more the names of his tribesmen and the news of their latest raiding exploits. He then told me his story.

He had joined a large raiding party which had attacked Trans-Jordan the year before, and which included several war banners of Mutair. A Beni Sakhr camp had been surprised and overwhelmed at dawn, and many killed. During the battle, he was hit by a bullet and fell unconscious from the back of his camel. When he recovered consciousness, he felt very cold. He looked around him. It appeared to be shortly after dawn, but the sun had not risen yet. He was stark naked and lying on the ground, with corpses and dead animals strewn around. A short way from where he lay were some black bedouin tents, from which a few wisps of smoke showed that the occupants were already awake. Shivering with cold, dazed and weak, he staggered towards the nearest tent. A man was kneeling in the tent with his back to him, blowing up the embers of a fire.

When the wounded boy was some ten paces from the tent, the man looked round. With a savage cry he sprang to his feet, snatched a rifle and ran towards him. But in his excitement he fumbled with the bolt and safety-catch. The naked Mutairi staggered past him and embraced the tent pole. "I am under the protection of this house," he cried. The Sakhri threw his rifle

Bachaus G-6 (1929-47) 1951 Mil 3 Kuwait
Bedouins 1634

In cast of countenance they would appear to be definitely non-Arab, and have none of the pronounced Semitic features of the latter.

In areas like Kuwait and Zubair, where they always maintain a large permanent camp outside the city walls, they are sometimes taken by Europeans for ordinary Badawin. This is a bad mistake and leads at times to awkward situations.

No Arab can marry a Sulubba girl. He would be killed by his people if he did, and she also. Nevertheless, I have heard it said that the Amir Fawaz of the Ruwala has no compunction in taking a pretty Sulubba maiden into the desert and keeping her as his mistress. For this he is roundly cursed by all good Badawin.

Most Sulubba settlements have their headmen, but where they are in strength among the major tribes of Arabia they have their shaikhs, some of whom own large flocks and herds of camels and are up to a point highly respected.

For instance:

Shaikh Hamad ibn Shamsan is the Shaikh of the Murair Sulubba.
Shaikh Muraiikj al Safi is the Shaikh of the Shammar Sulubba.
Shaikh Muhammad ibn Jilad is the Shaikh of the Amarat Sulubba.
Shaikh Ma'aithif is the Shaikh of the Ruwala Sulubba.

The Sulubba women never veil and rarely wear a *milfa* over the lower part of their faces. Hence in Najd they are at once recognisable.

They are very fond of dancing, and on any feast day or at a marriage ceremony, the first thing they do is to organise a dance. This takes the form of men and women dancing together (a highly disgraceful and unseemly thing among Arabs), at which the men every now and then kiss their partners on the mouth and before the audience.

The Sulubba has among his ceremonies, dances, etc., the strange custom of hoisting a cross made from two pieces of wood tied together in the form of a Christian emblem. It may be called his tribal mark or standard.

Well-read Arabs, like Shaikh 'Abdullah Salim al Subah, cousin of the Shaikh of Kuwait, and others, say quite definitely that the Sulubba are descendants of the large number of Crusader camp followers, who were taken captive during the Crusade and Saracen wars; that vast numbers of these camp followers were taken in several great battles

35: Theodore T-3 (1944-47)1948 MII Saudi Arabia
Bedouin MQ4

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P 394 (A)

25: Theiger T-3 (1944-47) 1949 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
Bedouin MJ4

142
262
291
342
415

[illegible] One of the most black Arab men picked was Mansoor's wife. This type is found exclusively in coastal districts where she is seen only on the wedges of plain men. Beside the tent stands an ostrich, she wears the long pointed dress of a Western Arab; in front, placed upside-down, is a leather trough from which the camels are watered. Around the Mansoors are scampering naked Arab children, a handy lot, even in colder months, when the dust and [illegible] the little girls wear [illegible] only a fringe round their hips. The children are fed mainly on camel's [illegible] and [illegible] a [illegible] of millet obtained from the [illegible] of the [illegible]

T 896 (8)

(Left) *Tribeswoman from the coastal region of the Ivours.* (Right) *Ivours lovlain, with eyelids darkened with antimony powder (kohl)*

Y
112
29

B
•142
302
291
y
162

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